

6267 Castille Court  
Orléans. K1C 1X4

Mr. Tom Clarke  
Senior Legal Counsel  
CBC

18/8/90

Dear Mr. Clarke,

RE: "Morningside"

I'm sorry to see that CBC's continuing posture is to attack the messenger instead of deal with a problem when it is brought forward. That was a concern one of my friends with environmental sensitivities had about the authorities during the period when CBC was covering Jean Metcalfe's story, and smearing the reputations of all persons with sensitivities in the process.

Peter MacCormach often phoned me at CBOT and complained about the way the story had been told, and, more significantly, the effect local coverage was having on his relationship with fellow professors at Carleton University. Peter had a number of problems that developed after he bought a UFFI home, but the biggest was dealing with social isolation caused by attitudes towards his disability.

There were numbers of people in the Ottawa area who suffered due to the recurring myths put forward in covering Ms Metcalfe's story. The problem was not unique at CBOT or CBC, or even to Ottawa. It was a problem across the country.

The problem was not a problem of lack of knowledge or scientific evidence of sensitivities. People had had the problem for generations. Literature dates back at least to 1892. The problem was what some people did in their own ignorance.

Unfortunately, apparently as a manifestation of medical politics, in the late seventies some authorities began to act in a discriminatory manner towards the environmentally sensitive. They began to make damaging statements which were not based on positive cause.

Note the emphasis is not on the fact that the statements were damaging, but on the fact that support for the statements was not positive, or evidentiary. This was a point that Mr. MacCormach pointed out to me several times while I was a journalist at CBOT.

Several times I passed on the concern Mr. MacCormach had expressed to the newsroom, that we were putting forward points of view that were bringing the legitimacy of Jean's "claim's" into

question with no real reason to do so. The response of the CBC reporter covering the story was to say that every other outlet in the city was doing the same thing, pointing to the Citizen as an example.

Several months later, after losing his house, his family, and his reputation at work, Peter MacCormach shot himself, and died. He used to call every couple of weeks or so up until his death, and he often commented on how pack journalism in Ottawa had severely hurt the environmentally sensitive.

Several journalists in Ottawa have agreed that Ms Metcalfe, and the environmentally sensitive in general, were given a raw deal. It is in this sense that I believe CBOT's coverage was a factor in Professor MacCormach's suicide, by helping to foster attitudes that led to the incredible levels of frustration which many of us experienced at the time.

The difference between CBOT and the other outlets at the time was, simply, that CBOT should have known better. Although I'm sure you won't have time to go into the details now, there were a number of significant facts reported concerning Ms Metcalfe's situation which CBC reporters either knew to be wrong when they reported them, or, in the case of some of the negative comments, knew of the unsubstantiated nature of the comments.

You have dismissed these facts as total exaggeration, as being untrue. I assure you they are not.

I challenge CBC management to clean up the attitudinal pollution which still exists in some dark corners of CBC journalism, and to find some way of responding to complaints about this concern other than attacking the messenger.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be the initials 'CB' or a stylized 'Chris Brown'.

Chris Brown  
(613) 837 7173